

Matthew 28:1-10

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[0:00] A.W. Tozer once wrote, The account of Jesus' life is the only biography known to man that does not end with a death and burial.

! It's hard to overstate the importance of this passage. The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the entire Christian faith rests on the empty tomb of Jesus Christ.

If Christ isn't risen, we go home. The only reason we're here, the only reason I know you, the only reason we believe that that gravesite over there isn't the end of the story, is because we believe that 2,000 years ago, a man walked out of his tomb.

This is the central fact of history. The biggest news story of all time. It is the vindication of Jesus Christ.

It is the victory of the church. It is the promise of glory. And it is the foundation of our hope.

[1:29] So let's look at what the Apostle Paul called the working of God's great might, that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

So let's pray and then let's consider the empty tomb of our risen Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, as we tread on holy ground, we ask that you would open our eyes to see.

Jesus, our risen Lord, our Savior, and our God. Lord, would you stoke a passion for his name in us? Would you quell our fears because of his victory? Would you stoke our joy so that we might be complete in him?

We pray this in the name above all names, Jesus Christ. Amen. The first thing I expect the most obvious thing about this passage is that it's not normal, right?

[2:46] People don't just rise from the dead. But that's just what the guards at the tomb saw, what the women as they came found.

And I think, like, friends, this isn't normal. But if you've been in church your whole life, maybe this is just like, yeah, I know.

I've heard that story. Friends, this doesn't happen. This needs to strike us as incredible. I feel that we, and I know that I, often do not appreciate the resurrection, the empty tomb, enough.

We're not, oh, amazed by it often enough, or deep enough, that, friends, our King rose from the grave.

Amen? Amen. Every once in a while, I get a reminder that this is something so spectacular, so out of the ordinary.

[4:00] My wife teaches English as a second language. Right now, she teaches it to children. In the past, she's taught it to adults in various contexts. One of the ways she's done it in the past is online.

That's before coronavirus got everybody used to being on Zoom all the time. Once, she told me a story that really excited me. She was teaching English as a second language to a student in a country that is closely closed to the gospel.

As she was teaching English, one of the things you do is just have a conversation, just to practice what you're doing. Sometimes it's a grammar lesson, but sometimes it's just conversational English to get comfortable with the language.

And so they were talking about their families and their lives, and the topic came to religion.

Foreigners are actually often much more ready to talk about religion than Americans, is what it is.

And so they were talking about religion, and he had never heard the story of Jesus, ever. And as she was telling him, yeah, this is what Christians believe, she told him about the death of Jesus Christ in our place, and how he was buried.

[5:15] And then she got to the resurrection. And she said, and he rose from the grave on the third day, and he was so blown away. And it took her

aback.

And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin.

And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. And it turned out a lot of sin. death the final enemy underfoot this is a different kind of victory many that we're used to even thinking about there is no victory like his victory no one else is even taking on that enemy death right everyone else is fighting lesser battles like politics economics and getting the kids to bed on time right this is unique no one else is fighting the fight he entered because it doesn't even occur to us that this is a battle that can be won the superpower right at that moment wasn't fighting a battle against death caesar had far less impressive goals world domination that's much less impressive than what jesus accomplished right and the interesting thing is it's kind of the same with his own people right ever since chapter 16 when jesus began talking about his upcoming trial and death the disciples had trouble understanding is that's going to be a problem we've got some intrepid explorers here who are going to help us out thanks guys i'm glad i wasn't standing under that i'm going to keep going while they take care of that thank you guys right his own followers weren't ready for this they they had been kind of peter opposed christ right as he was um as he said i'm going to go and die he wanted a messiah that the most of the jews wanted at the time right rome was oppressing them they wanted to get rid of rome they wanted to re-establish the kingdom of david they expected a messiah of of might not neatness yet in his trial he never spoke a word to his own defense at his crucifixion he never lifted a finger to protect himself here was no conqueror it seemed except he did conquer didn't he the worst rome could throw at him he shrugged it off in three days the strongest attack that this world can launch ineffective but what's even more than that right he wasn't just suffering rome's attack he was suffering for three hours under the darkness of god right that's the much worse punishment he suffered not under rome's wrath against insurrectionists but divine wrath at human evil yours and mine even the great storm of divine judgment the divine son endured victorious and overcame he proves himself a far stronger messiah than israel had ever anticipated right he didn't defeat rome he defeated death rome fell on its own

right the soldiers here the source of and symbol of rome's imperial might they're struck down not by a direct blow the angel's not even there for them they are struck down as if dead just by the arrival of the angel to herald the news of victory right he doesn't need their permission he's not even there for their attention he's there for someone else so rome the superpower greater than anything you or i know in our lifetime right here is presented as an after how does that reframe the way we think about today he won a battle that the greatest powers of the world didn't even imagine could be won in their wildest dreams caesar didn't have aspirations this high and so friends let's rejoice in the empty tomb i love how charles spurgeon put it he said leave when you see the tomb of christ rejoice because it is everything your sin killed it but his divinity raised him up your guilt murdered him but his righteousness restored he has burst the bonds of death he has shamed the tomb and has come out more than conqueror crushing death beneath his feet rejoice oh christian for he is not there he is risen so we are not gathered here as a church body as a dry duty oh no not not as a tedious ritual not as a family tradition that we just do because it's what we do no we are here because we follow someone who came back from the dead jesus is alive can you believe it he went to the grave subjected to death and he won so let's not come to worship thinking that it is our boring obligation this is a celebration of the world i can't stress it enough he is not dead and what does that mean that the angel explains verse 5 the angel said to the women do not be afraid for i know that you see jesus who was crucified he is not here for he has risen as he said come and see the place where he lay right what is this doing what is he pointing out there when he said as he said the empty tomb vindicates jesus and his whole ministry right he is true he had told mary the mom the day that he raised lazarus from the dead he said i am the resurrection and the life and now he has proved it he has shown it this is the vindication of his whole ministry you might remember from chapter nine he said to uh the pharisees when he healed the lame man he asked them he said which is easier to say to say your sins are forgiven or to say rise and walk but that you may know that the son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins he then said to the paralytic rise pick up your bed and go home

right he asked which is harder to say it was harder to say obviously to the paralytic rise and walk away and then he did the harder thing to validate the easier things well here's the hardest thing of all the hardest thing of all that he could have said right he takes what he did with that paralytic and he he's he's turning it up to 11 here right in john chapter 7 he said i lay down my life that i may take it up again no one takes it from me but i lay it down of my own accord i have authority to lay it down and i have authority to take it up again which is harder to heal the lame that's pretty hard or to raise the dead well he did both and which is harder still to raise the dead or to take up your own life after you've died jesus did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did both and then he did validated by this event his empty tomb everything he taught everything he modeled for us all of it is true and good and empowered by the same spirit which rose him up in victory and and and when he asked me what i did for a living and he found out that i was a pastor the conversation turned to spiritual things he said that he admired jesus but he didn't think he was the only way to connect with god and so i i asked him you know so you probably don't like that whole i am the way the truth and the life no one comes to the father but by me this right and he didn't i i said to him if the tomb is empty you have to listen to him he paused for a moment i don't really remember exactly how he replied but he he on the one hand didn't want to acknowledge it but on the other hand couldn't really say anything back against it right because if the tomb is empty you do have to listen to him and so from his first teaching repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand to the sermon on the mount to the missionary sermon of chapter 10 to his condemnation of religious hypocrisy in chapter 23 that was a fun chapter right you have to listen to him if the tomb is empty and i like how one pastor put it he said it proved him to be that is the empty tomb proved him to be a prophet a miracle worker and it threw back his authenticating light on everything he said and did during his earthly ministry and just a side note friends you know uh for me that that conversation that evangelist conversation that happens when people find out that i'm a pastor like oh immediately you know when someone says what do you do and i say i'm a pastor like that's a pretty easy entry into spiritual things it's also something that shuts people off pretty quick too but you know it's it's neither here nor there um there's a way for you to have that easy entry point too um all you have to do when someone says what do you do you can say hey i work at ev or i um you know i'm in the coast

[17:50] guard whatever whatever it is that you do i'm a stay-at-home parent um all you have to do is say i'm that and i help out with kids at church or i do that and i'm involved with faith to faith or what do you do i do this and whatever it is that you're involved it should be involved at church right and then you have that easy entry point where you can say hey i do this and here's a spiritually important thing in my life and that immediately opens doors for you to ask questions or for you to go off into that right so no excuse be involved in church and now you have an evangelistic opening go forth and do that's a great thing so the tomb is empty this is totally unique the empty tomb is a victory unlike any other in it is the source of our joy and the empty tomb means that we have to listen to him and if we pay attention because jesus shows up in this passage we'll learn something else even more when jesus greets the women in verses 9 and 10 he says almost the same exact thing the angel has said right the angel says do not be afraid jesus says do not be afraid the angel says he is not here for he is risen amen it's amazing right and jesus shows himself outside the tomb he's not there and very much alive he is risen the angel says go quickly tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead and behold he is going before you to galilee there you will see him and jesus likewise says to the women to tell the disciples to go to galilee and there they will see you know it's thought for thought nearly word for word except there's this interesting wrinkle the angel calls the 12 his disciples jesus calls them my brothers the angel says that's no small change right the language that jesus uses for his disciples after his resurrection has changed here he calls them brothers john chapter 20 he calls them brothers he calls them children later in john chapter 20 he says i am ascending to my father and your father father and your father and your father suddenly they are not

Saying he is risen. He is risen in the faith. We pray these things in his name. For the sake of his glory. Amen.

Friends, let's now join together and sing.